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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the process of investigating a teacher's knowledge and pedagogical philosophy through using a biographical rendition of a teacher's knowledge grounded in a construction of present teaching practice, based on ethnographic data. A case study is presented demonstrating how a major component of one teacher's present knowledge of her practice, the "idea of responsibility", has changed throughout her career. A discussion is presented illustrating how a grounded conceptualization of this teacher's present pedagogy emerged from an ethnographic approach to her actions in the classroom. Following a description of what the "idea of responsibility" means in terms of her current teaching practices, its various manifestations at different moments in the teacher's life are examined, as well as how transformations occurred in the teacher's thinking. Some issues concerning the potential of combined ethographic and biographical approaches to the study of teacher's knowledge as a process are raised. In Part One of the paper, an outline is given of the ethnographic study, how data were collected and interpreted, and the progressive stages of the ethnographic investigation. A discussion is offered on her philosophy of teaching, approach to children, conception of learning and subject matters, and curriculum materials, and how she transforms theory into practice. In Part Two, the collection of biographical data and their interpretation is discussed. Concluding comments offer reflections on the validity of combining ethographic and biographical approaches in the study of the formation of a teacher's pedagogy. (JD)

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Investigating Teachers' Knowledge through ethnographic and biographical approaches:

A case study

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In the last decade, a set of studies of teachers' theories and beliefs have been concerned with developing and substantiating appropriate conceptualizations for the teacher's professional knowledge. It has been observed that such investigations propose to "study the personal, that is, the what, why and wherefore of individual pedagogical action" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1986, p.21-22). Studies of the personal would thus obviously encompass ongoing classroom practices and prior personal experience. However, very few of these studies include the teacher's experiential history in their rendition of teacher thought. Indeed, preoccupied with the generation of appropriate representations for teacher thinking, most studies of the personal remain focused on its current contents, forms, structures and uses (Bussis, Chittenden and Amarel, 1976; Duffy, 1977; Janesick, 1982; Larsson, 1984; Marland, 1977; Olson, 1981; Pope and Scott, 1984).

In one study, "biographical detail" is offered, in an attempt to provide experiential links between a teacher's image of her classroom and her personal and professional lives (Clandinin, 1985). The image of the "Classroom as Home" is seemingly rooted in the teacher's professional experience, professional training, schooling experience, and private life. Prior experience is said to be "kept alive" in current pedagogical practices, mediated by the teacher's image. The continuity between current expressions of teacher's knowledge and prior personal and professional experience is thus established in terms of experiential <u>sources</u> for the image and are included in the implied concept of the personal.

Albeit broadening former views, this approach does not exhaust the concept of the personal. As we've argued elsewhere (Butt and Raymond, in press), former experiential material that does not "fit" the image might have been overlooked; current thoughts and actions might represent some kind of compromise between what the teacher knows she has done in the past (or what she would prefer to do) and the particulars of the present circumstances. Past images that could well have compounded the teacher's knowledge at a given stage in her career

might have faded or have, only partly, been integrated into her current thinking.

But, more importantly, locating experiential sources does not tell us how the teacher progressively constructed and integrated their meaning; nor does it describe how she achieved within herself the integration of these experiences with what she had become at various stages in her career. We could envisage, for instance, that the image of the "Classroom as Home" (Clandinin, 1985) or "Classroom as Heaven" (Butt, Raymond and Ray, 1987) might have undergone various transformative stages, within which the teacher would seek for or assess selected professional development experiences for their congruence with her developing image. The processes whereby later expressions of teacher's knowledge are created would be a telling reflection of the teacher's individuality. Knowing teacher's knowledge as a formative process might thus lie at the heart of investigative efforts aimed at revealing its personal nature. Prior personal and professional experiences would then be approached not only with a view to expose their contents and their presence/expression in current practices, but also with the purpose of revealing how the individuation of this teacher's knowledge was progressively carved.

It is this understanding of what could be encompassed by the concept of "the personal" that led us to adopt and develop biographical approaches in the study of a teacher's knowledge. Understanding a teacher's knowledge as a formative process implied examining how teachers evolve, develop and change their practical knowledge in the way that they perceive their experience of its development. Our interest thus lies in how the teacher created herself both as a unique person and professional (Pinar, 1986) in the midst of contextual and situational influences. At the same time, we want to consider how the teacher might have created or modified contexts or situations thus projecting on them her own evolving individuality. Dewey's notion of education addresses this cyclic transformative relationship between person and context. Dewey saw personal experience as the prime source of education and posited an inside-out view of educative and formative

processes, where particular experiences would be educative only if characterized by interaction, continuity and wholeness.

Berk (1980) suggests that Dewey's notion of education is explained by reference to biography:

> "In so far as we are capable of asking, in terms of experience, how a particular individual has come to have the ideas, the values that he or she possesses, we are employing a biographic conception." (p.92)

When approached formatively, the study of a teacher's knowledge involves considering its successive de-structuring and reconstructing phases; thus history, far from being a chronicle of events, would, for instance, examine what triggered a disequilibrium in what had so far seemed like a functional and "achieved" (complete) image or teaching principle and how the teacher searched, through further formative experiences, a new more integrative equilibrium.

Arguments for the use of ethnographic and biographical approaches

Elsewhere (Butt and Raymond, 1986, 1987a, 1987b, 1988 in press) we have reported one way of engaging in biographical work with teachers, which involves collaborative autobiographical writing within the context of a graduate course. In this approach teachers initially constructed their own descriptions of their current pedagogy and later elaborated an account of their past lives as they relate to their thinking as teachers. Current pedagogical practices or dilemmas were often communicated through vignettes, scenarios or poems, in ways that teachers deemed appropriate to convey their multi-faceted meanings. Action was thus reconstructed by the teacher away from specific classroom activity, in a context that fostered reflection-on-action over time.

The remoteness from action and its ensuing reflective stance, albeit allowing for the elaboration of a coherent perspective on the teacher's pedagogy and professional development, fell short of zeroing in on specific teaching events and practices as well as on the

teacher's day-by-day related thoughts. The immediate context of teaching as it is apperceived, attended to, used and shaped by the teacher, an integral part of her thinking-in-action, plausibly ran the risk of eluding the more general personal reconstructions. Professional tools-of-the-trade (curriculum materials, schedules, notes, memos and children's productions, worksheets, etc...) whether still in use or for years relegated to the back of the shelves, could not be apprehended as embodiments of the teacher's intentions at various stages in the development of a given practice, and therefore as clues to the formative processes we were interested in. The biographical material, by not being tied to specific and ordinary classroom events or artifacts might not reveal the synchrony of thought and action at different moments in the refinement of the teacher's practices.

We thus evolved a methodology whereby a biographical rendition of a teacher's knowledge would be grounded in a construction of present teaching practice, based on ethnographic data. As it had been the case in autobiographical material, doing an ethnography in the first phase of the study would allow us to enter the teacher's world and to elaborate a rendition of her present knowledge as she sees it. Starting with an ethnography implies understanding the teacher from her own perspective, using her own language to qualify children, practices, contents to be taught or curriculum materials and to describe herself as teacher and person. But, in addition, an ethnography would lead to a conceptualization comprising embodiments of the teacher's knowledge in specific contexts and day-to-day actions. A combination of ethnographic observations and interviews (Spradley, 1979, 1980), would thus ensure that the assumption about a teacher's knowledge as defined in terms of both thoughts and actions would be carried into the conduct of the study. Finally, since questions and interpretations emerging from an initial and more comprehensive data collection period would be later pursued in more restricted observational contexts (Lecompte and Goetz, 1984), the progressive and collaborative conceptualization of the teacher's present pedagogy would remain anchored in the world of every day practice.

The ethnography would thus provide both the teacher and the researcher with a common language and a shared meaning system that could be relied on to approach and understand the more remote biographical material. The grounded conceptualization of the teacher's present knowledge would then serve as the basis for a shared interpretation of life history data: past understandings of teaching practices could be contrasted with present meanings, thus providing clear indications of the nature of the changes. Both teacher and researcher could then together inquire on how these changes occurred and develop a shared understanding of the formative processes involved.

The Case Study

This case study presents how a major component of one teacher's present knowledge of her practice, the "idea of responsibility" has changed throughout her career. In what follows, we will first expose how a grounded conceptualization of this teacher's present pedagogy emerged from an ethnographic approach to her actions in the classroom; then, following a description of what the "idea of responsibility" means in terms of her current teaching practices, we will examine its various manifestations at different moments in the teacher's life, as well as how these transformations occurred. We will finally raise some issues concerning the potential of combined ethnographic and biographical approaches to the study of teachers' knowledge as process.

Stephanie (a self chosen pseudonym) is 40 years old and teaches grade 4 in a small town located in the suburbs of a medium size city. Stephanie describes her school of 400 pupils as situated in a "nice environment of middle income families of "no problem" children. ("Ce ne sont pas des enfants à problèmes".)

Stephanie acquired her 20-years teaching experience in 6 different schools. She taught at all grade levels, both as a regular teacher and as a "specialist" in music and physical education.

During the first seven years of her career, Stephanie did not attend any professional development activities; she was unsure about committing herself to teaching. After preservice teacher education, she had completed one year in premed school and wondered whether she would pursue a medical career. At the end of her 7th year of teaching, she dropped that idea, committed herself to teaching and initiated a series of formal professional development activities that in turn led to a B.ed, a certificate in Educational technology and a master's degree. She started attending workshops and conferences, in particular activities sponsored by the provincial association of language arts teachers.

She spent the year preceding her involvement in this study on what she calls "a sabbatical" taking a few ESL classes that would be useful in future trips; but mostly she "did nothing" at her country house, "taking care of the flowers and not having to get up early each morning". She missed her teaching, the company of children and the contact with other teachers. She was looking forward to coming back to the school: teaching she said was what she liked to do.

When she was approached for this project, she saw it as an "occasion to reflect on what she was doing", since she usually "does not stop to look at what she does" (CD 12.9.7). She mentioned that she liked the fact that somebody would discuss her teaching with her.

PART I: ETHNOGRAPHY

A) DATA COLLECTION AND INTERPRETATION PROCESS

The conceptualization of Stephanie's present pedagogy unfolded as a three stage process involving, at each stage, concurrent collection and interpretation of ethnographic data.

1. First Stage

At the very beginning, our ignorance of Stephanie's perspective, coupled with her obvious - and self-avowed - propensity to be somewhat

reserved, led us to adopt the role of "passive observers" (Spradley, 1979:59), watching classroom activities and interaction from a fixed position at the back of the classroom. Condensed accounts (Spradley, 1979:69) of various classroom activities were thus drawn for 16 days of teaching and one day of planning spread over a two-month period; these accounts involved descriptive observations aimed at general descriptions of classroom events. Toward the end of this period, as the record started to indicate some patterns, we focused the observations on specific aspects of the classroom. We also fully participated in special events like Halloween. Every day, before and after class and during the breaks, we had several informal conversations with the teacher. At the end of each day in the classroom, we wrote a detailed account (Spradley, 1980) of these observations and conversations.

Toward the end of this stage, we conducted a first ethnographic interview with Stephanie, in order to know, beyond her descriptions of specific classroom events, the language she would use to describe how these events were related in her head. The first part of the interview covered her understandings of the present day, as it unfolded, in relation to how she saw the following day. In the second part of the interview, since her understandings of the present day were organized in terms of periods of time, we asked her to describe classroom events accordingly.

As mentioned in the introduction, we interpreted these data as we were proceeding. This interpretation initially involved the construction of "domains" (Spradley, 1980), in terms of symbolic categories that include other symbolic categories. For instance, this diagram shows an initial construction of Stephanie's notion of time:

Data index	X	Semantic relationship	Semantic category
CD 29.10.5	. Time it takes to design a teaching guide in science		
	. Time spent on different themes in science	is a	
	. Time in the school calendar	kind	time
	. Time covered by a work-sheet	of	
CC 19.10.16	. A specific time in the school year (November)		
CC 29.10.19	. Time for an activity		
CC 29.10.21	. Time spent in a given subject in a week		

Fig 1:
Initial construction of Stephanie's notion of time

The construction of semantic categories constituted a first step towards data reduction.

In parallel to domain analysis, several readings of the data led to the formation of tentative hypotheses about how Stephanie viewed her teaching. For instance, during a math lesson, we had observed that Stephanie had asked the children to describe the many ways in which they could solve a subtraction problem. We then hypothesized that Stephanie would acknowledge that children have their own, different ways of solving computational problems. Hypotheses, such as this one, which was later confirmed, oriented subsequent observations and interviews.

2. Second Stage

Following from the preceding interpretation, it appeared plausible that Stephanie thought her teaching in terms of a one-week time frame and according to each subject matter area. Selective observations, spanning three consecutive weeks, were thus made, for each subject matter: the first week, language arts, the second week, maths, and the third week, music, science, humanities and religious education.

Each day, observation in the classroom was followed by a

semi-structured, ethnographic interview, constituted of descriptive, structural and contrast questions (Spradley, 1979). In the first part of the interview, Stephanie described, from her point of view, what had happened in the period that had been observed. In the second part, tentative hypotheses that had emerged from previous data interpretations were checked with her in relation to this period. For instance, during a preceding interview, Stephanie had described what she called "her role" in a specific language arts lesson. We posited that she might take on various roles while teaching. Thus, we asked her what was the role that she had taken in the present lesson. We later found out that these roles were central in her understandings of her teaching.

At the end of this stage, it became obvious that we did not comprehend how the teacher saw her working context as well as her relationships with her "peers" that she had repeatedly qualified as important to her. An ethnographic interview thus covered her perceptions of her school, her colleagues, including the school principal.

Data interpretation proceeded according to each observation/interview cycle. We pursued the construction of data in terms of domains and attempted a classification of domains within broader categories. This, joined with repetitive hypotheses checking, led us to envisage a construction of Stephanie's thinking in terms of 18 broad dimensions.

3. Third Stage

No classroom observation was conducted during this last stage. First, the 18 dimensions previously constructed were used to perform a retrospective interpretation of all the ethnographic data. In addition to making it possible to verify and refine our preliminary understandings, this interpretation led us to formulate an initial global conceptualization of Stephanie's thinking comprising 8 dimensions. We presented her with a written interpretive account of this conceptualization, together with structural and contrast questions

aimed at further clarifications. Stephanie elected to reply in writing to this initial conceptualization and proposed some changes in the organization of the dimensions.

The last interview was conducted to validate the second conceptualization that ensured. This conversation allowed us to form a final conceptualization of her present pedagogy in terms of seven broad dimensions that Stephanie elected to call the "Domains of her Teaching".

B) STEPHANIE'S PRESENT PEDAGOGY

Stephanie's thinking of her present pedagogy is organized in terms of 7 "domains": Philosophy of teaching, approach to the children, conception of learning, conception of subject matters, conception and uses of curriculum materials, planning and "déroulement de l'enseignement". She understands the interaction between these domains in terms of a metaphor that expresses, at a global level, what teaching is for her: "Teaching, it's a chain of intertwined links (CD 12.9.12.4). Stephanie clarifies the meaning of this metaphor, as in the following:

> "The links are all these domains
> that we're decorticating (sic)
> in the present document, don't you
> think?" (CD 12.9.12).

The seven domains, constituted of her actions and her thoughts, appear to be the interrelated links of the chain that describes her teaching. Although separately described here, these links are constantly intertwined in her head and in her actions.

1. Philosophy of Teaching

Stephanie's philosophy of teaching is a "working method", constituted of curriculum practices that are privileged according to what she calls her "approach to the children". With this working method she "creates a climate for learning" (CD 28.2.26), while respecting and using her own characteristics, personal knowledge (CD 28.2.33), her interests (CD 28.2.33), and her own mastery of the

notions to pass on to children (CD 28.2.33). Within this philosophy, she distinguishes between, on the one hand, curriculum practices that would pertain to a philosophy of teaching that she qualifies as "ancient", and on the other hand, practices related to a new philosophy, influenced by, among other things, the "spirit" of the recently implemented teaching curricula.

The fundamental "idea" of this philosophy of teaching is the idea of responsibility that Stephanie ascribes herself and other participants in the educational process. The idea of responsibility seems to be the organizing principle of Stephanie's thinking on her teaching. For instance in relationship with the domain "conceptions of learning", "responsibility" means "taking charge of what goes into the learning process": this responsibility can be taken on by her or by the children themselves.

2. Approach to the children

Stephanie's approach to children means at a first level how she relates to them in the classroom: this relationship is described in terms of various roles - big sister, friend, mother, consultant, teacher. The teacher/student relationship is the fundamental one, however; less seldom adopted, the other types of relationships depend on particular circumstances and on the personalities of the children.

At a second level, her approach to children comprises a knowledge about children and her class as a group. This knowldge recognizes in kids a specific language, interest, knowledge, as well as "tricks and ways to proceed to arrive at the answer" (CD 27.10,31), that are their own. This knowledge goes right into her practices. For instance, she plans the school year according to what she knows about the children:

> "She says to me that the school year goes fast and that by April it's nearly over. She says that after April, she cannot undertake big projects. In May and June the children play outdoors after dinner. They also come back from recess all geared up and excited, they can't concentrate.

> January, February and March, these are the months when a lot of work can get done. The same for November. But, already in early December the kids are thinking Christmas. They are less focused. During these times, she does not teach anything new, she only does some "reviewing" of what has already been seen" (CD 27.10.2).

3. Conception of learning

For Stephanie, children learn in multiple ways constituted of precise and sequenced actions. A child goes through a stepwise learning process of his own. The goal of the learning process is "to develop in children their capacity to ask themselves questions and to reflect on them" (CD 27.10.34).

There are, for Stephanie, necessary conditions for learning: children's involvement in their own learning, following the learning hierarchy pertaining to a specific notion, and respecting where children are in this hierarchy (CD 25.11.12); multiple learning avenues and an appropriate environment are also required.

Stephanie ascribes herself a role in the learning process. That is to put in place and structure ways that will foster the child's "taking charge" of his/her own learning process, for which he/she is primarily responsible.

4. Conception of subject matters

Each one of the teaching subjects is thought in terms of "content to convey", or notions (CC 9.10.6), objectives to be attained, skills to be practiced, working method, evaluation mode, as well as in terms of an allotted time within a weekly "assiette-horaire".

The contents to convey is formed of "notions" described in terms of "portions of subject matter" that are seen over and over again during the six elementary years. Stephanie does not own all of the

knowledge that is shared in the classroom. What children know is also part of the contents that is conveyed. For instance, in science, she uses the children's categories for different kinds of animals to generate other types of criteria (CD 8.10).

Stephanie aligns the different subject matter areas in terms of their relative importance, which is based on the one hand, on her estimation of "what is essential for children to know for when they will get into high school" (CD 13.3.34), and on the other hand, on the allotted portion of the weekly schedule. She gives priority to language arts and math, areas she says she knows quite well: in fact, most of her professional development activities were conducted in these areas. She sees science, humanities, religious education and music, as much less important and calls them "culture générale".

5. Conception and uses of curriculum materials

"Materials" include textbooks, exercise books and various sources from which Stephanie derives the "contents to be conveyed", such as the curriculum guides, worksheets, documentation; also included are various audio visual and technological devices used in planning and conducting classroom activites.

Materials are the starting point of Stephanie's planning. She selects this material according to its potential to make the child take charge of his own learning and also according to what she knows about how children learn.

She divides teaching materials in two broad categories: first, "basic materials" that designate what children "have in their hands", right from the beginning of the school year. Second, "materials that are her own", that she has collected or created over the years, which, she says, "distinguishes her from other teachers". For instance, this latter category includes worksheets that she created a few years before in a professional development course on programmed learning. These worksheets are designed in such a way that children can do and

correct their own various exercises dealing with the measurement of length.

In her uses of the basic materials, Stephanie follows the learning hierarchy proposed by the developers. However, these basic material is insufficient and she completes with other sources. This complementary material is always used after the basic material and is most of the time aimed at providing enrichment. Stephanie also sees that the role of her own materials is to "faire varier le déroulement de l'enseignement" (CD 13.3.40).

6. Planning

Stephanie's four types of planning practices are best understood in terms of the time they cover. First there is the "work plan" that covers two to three weeks of teaching, then weekly, daily and spontaneous planning.

Stephanie's planning is performed according to two major guidelines: "the baggage acquired by the children" and "objectives to be attained by 9-years old for each subject matter area" (CD 28.2.9).

Stephanie also has in mind six major preoccupations while she plans: the contents to be taught, the level attained in terms of the learning hierarchy of a given notion, how to teach this notion, what materials are available, when and for how much time will this notion be taught, and whether the children will be interested.

7. "Déroulement de l'enseignement"

Stephanie thinks of her teaching in terms of "contents to be conveyed, which is related to her conception of subject matter areas, and of "déroulement". Le "déroulement" is where she goes "from theory to practice", which means where she puts children in touch with the contents (theory) - either previously or spontaneously planned - using a set of teaching practices that she calls teaching modalities

(collective, small group or individual work, collective explanation, activity, teacher/student dialogue, collective production). These modalities are used according to the various roles that the child can take vis-a-vis the contents conveyed and to what a specific teaching situation calls for:

> "When it is a new notion, I usually do it through collective work. A restricted material might orient me to set up small working teams. If I want to evaluate where the child is on a specific learning, it will be individual work" (CD 28.2.30).

PART II: BIOGRAPHY

A) DATA COLLECTION AND INTERPRETATION PROCESS

Biographical data were gathered by the means of seven semi-structured interviews conducted over three and a half months. The interviews took place in Stephanie's classroom at the end of the school day.

As we had expected, biographical information had surfaced during the ethnographic part of the study; however, these biographical details were too few and too disparate to be used as starting points for this part of the study. Because of this, the first two interviews aimed at revealing the general pattern of Stephanie's career. She thus traced the history of her choice to become a teacher and depicted the main events that punctuated her career together with her changing intentions throughout all these changes. Events of her life prior to entry into teaching, including pre-service teacher education, were also covered. Finally, professional development activities and interactions with colleagues were also included.

In the analysis that followed, a chronicle of Stephanie's career was established; we also developed a seven category framework that would be used to analyze all the biographical material. These categories are: chronological referent, that allowed to circumscribe

the period in Stephanie's career where a given change had taken place. The nature of the change, that included Stephanie's general reconstruction of what had changed in her teaching at a given time in her career. Teaching practices contained information detailing, at the classroom level, how this change was expressed. Biographical sources and influences included elements contributing to a given change in Stephanie's knowledge. Process contained information pertaining to how a given change had taken place. Constancies contained information on a given aspect of her present teaching that had not undergone any transformation. A last category Links with present teaching was used to index the relevant domain(s) of Stephanie's present knowledge to which pertained a specific change in her thoughts or practices.

The third interview aimed at probing changes more specifically related to her knowledge, as conceptualized in the ethnographic part of the study. Stephanie was asked to describe the changes in her knowledge, as well as how these changes came about.

As we analyzed these data, we found it difficult to pinpoint the specific changes that could have happened in her teaching practices. For instance, changes in her "approach to children" were described in terms of general intentions or general trends only. For the 3 subsequent interviews, we chose to focus the conversations on curricular practices described in the ethnographic part of the study, that seemed typical of her teaching in a given subject matter area. Starting with field notes excerpts that were shared with Stephanie, we asked her to indicate whether her specific practice had undergone some changes, and when it was the case, to describe how these changes came about. We also asked her to describe the successive and gradual transformations of this practice. Stephanie had some problems with this, saying that "she didn't know (...) because it is hard to think of appropriate examples this fast" (CD 9.4.14). These data were interpreted using the seven category framework previously mentioned.

A last interview was conducted, first to validate our interpretation of the major changes in Stephanie's knowledge, and

second to probe her views about future changes in her teaching. Using the seven domains that summarized her present knowledge, we asked her to communicate how they might evolve. The data were interpreted with the seven category framework developed for the interviews dealing with the past.

B) THE EVOLUTION OF THE "IDEA OF RESPONSIBILITY" IN THE LEARNING PROCESS

Since our analysis of biographical data is still in progress, we will limit our discussion of the change process to one aspect of Stephanie's knowledge, the idea of responsibility, a central part of her philosophy of teaching as it is related to the learning process. Over Stephanie's career, this "idea" changed from total appropriation by the teacher of the responsibility for children's learning, to sharing this responsibility with them.

1. Initial configuration

During her first five years as a teacher, Stephanie sees the teacher as totally responsible for the learning happening in her classroom. This view of the teacher is embodied in curriculum practices such as "not to work on her own things while children are working on their own". Stephanie locates the origin of this idea in several biographical sources.

From her experience as a schoolgirl, she gained an image of the "good teacher" as somebody who should be totally available to her pupils. She recalls one teacher who expressed this image by sitting down, doing nothing else when the children would work on an assignment. This image is further colored by imperatives derived from daily contacts with family members (mother, brothers and sisters) who, all teachers, were also "big workers": "she should work very hard, to the point of perfection" (CD 24.311), put teaching at the centre of her life, spend most evenings on classroom preparation; she should also be all over the place in the classroom and, at the end of the day, feel

totally exhausted. This initial view of the teacher as "somebody who should always give her maximum" (CD 2.4.3.11), she sees as congruent with what she calls her nature, her temperament that she depicts by an analogy with the role of the housewife:

> "You see women in the home who, when they are not working - well, they won't give themselves a half hour break in the day - they will feel guilty, they'll tell themselves "this or that has not been cleaned, I should be doing it and here I am doing nothing watching T.V. They will feel guilty if they stop working" (CD 1.05.47).

The initial idea of responsibility, colored with guilt also has roots in her upbringing where she could not play, do her own thing, explore her own choices. Looking back on how she became a teacher, she expresses how even this choice emanated from a sense of duty, of obligation to fulfil her family's expectations for her:

> "When you realize, when you're a teenager or when you're a little bit older, that so many people have invested of themselves in you and you don't want to disappoint them; it creates obligations that can transform all our career, all our life. Because it has us make choices that are not always according to our own tastes, if we were totally free to choose" (CD 24.3.6).

This image of the teacher was further drilled into her by pre-service teacher education. There, she is taught to take full control of children's behavior in the classroom:

> "It comes from my drill in teachers' college, where we had to put children to work and then do nothing else but watch them while they work" (CD 14.4.11).

This drill was set against deeply felt insecurities about maintaining classroom discipline when she started teaching. This insecurity, she says, originates in a lack of contact with children in her personal life. Knowing very little about children, it was thus impossible for her to get a feeling of, or a sense for, their responsility in the learning process.

At the beginning of her career, the "idea of responsibility" colored with guilt is rooted in mutually reinforcing experiences that have contributed to the formation of an image of "the good teacher" that is expressed in terms of imperatives and practices aimed at total classroom control.

2. First transformation

A first dent in this idea is made after five years, when she changes her status from a regular teacher to a music and physical education specialist. In this position, Stephanie is no longer "responsible for teaching the most important subjects, such as language arts and maths". In her own words, her "teaching responsibilities were not as important", and "there was less weight on her shoulders"; the whole school year is not at stake" (CD 9.4.10). This initiates some changes in her relationship with children: "I became more relaxed (...) and I had more interesting contacts with the kids (CD 9.4.11). A different physical environment, the gymnasium or the music class, where furniture can be moved around, as well as the kinds of subject matters she taught, lead her to experiment with different teaching practices where a different teacher/pupil relationship could be experienced.

For instance, in music, while teaching dance, she starts with having the children perform folk dances, according to a choreography that she had previously taught them. Then, she has the kids design their own choreography to music she has selected. Then the children also choose the music. Throughout these modifications in teaching practices, Stephanie might conceivably have come to know children in a new light. Children could be creative. And as she goes on, she has children more and more involved in the choice of teaching contents.

She also recalls that at that time, she had become much less insecure about her capacity to maintain classroom discipline. For instance, she says that, given these subject matters, "it is to be expected that there would be noise, that kids would not be aligned like onions in a garden" (CD 9.4.11).

Her initial construction of the idea of responsibility, where the teacher controls the aspects of the learning process has undergone important and progressive modifications to the point of involving children, to a certain extent, in the determination of contents to be learned.

3. Second transformation

A second series of changes is initiated by another modification of Stephanie's teaching assignments. She's offered, at the end of her third year as a specialist, a grade 3 regular teacher position in a school with a special curriculum: half of the teaching time is spent in music. It is a new school, a "new project of art classes" (CD 24.3.19); it is also a time in Stephanie's career where she is at "her best".

Many sources can explain the direction of the changes that her idea of responsibility will undergo. Stephanie says that she now feels committed to teaching: This commitment is expressed in her getting involved in formal, professional development activities, on a part-time basis:

> "I went 7 years without taking any course because it was really not my priority. It could have happened any time. I decided to study when I realized that I was there to stay" (CD 9.4.17).

Her new assignment coincides with the realization that teaching will be a life-long commitment. She musters her energy and obtains her teaching license: in addition, she takes violin lessons and attends several workshops that have been set up as part of the implementation of the new curricula. She also contributes to the grade 3 work team.

Stephanie considers that this was the time when contact with other teachers was the most important:

> "We had so much interest in this kind of project (art classes). We wanted it

> to be successful with all our hearts: we wanted parents to be satisfied, kids to learn the most. We wanted the kids to love every moment of it and we wanted the learning to be top notch. The principal worked very hard and we planned everything as a team" (CD 24.3.19).

The team that she forms with the other grade 3 teachers, she sees as "quite exceptional" (CD 24.3.20), both personally and professionally: "We get along like two fingers of the same hand" (CD 24.3.20). Stephanie also mentions that she was also ready for further changes in her teaching:

> "I did not feel I wanted to be teaching, with chalk in my hands, with the kids sitting there listening" (CD 9.4.13).

Various elements thus predisposed Stephanie for significant changes: A new teaching position, a new school, her decision to commit herself to teaching, working toward a degree, the presence of values and objectives shared with her colleagues, a stimulating working team and her own desire to change her teaching practices.

Stephanie talks about this time in terms of a significant moment in the development of her idea of responsibility:

> "It is at that moment when I started at Sacred Heart (school) that I really started to center my teaching around the child and not around my own role" (CD 9.4.13).

Her teaching practices in composition illustrate the changes happening in her idea. When she started teaching, every Friday afternoon, Stephanie asked the children to write a page on a pre-determined theme. Then, she collected the assignments, marked them and later gave them back to the children. Here is how she sees what she was doing:

> "Well, I find that this was really centered around me, in the sense that the child had to do what I was telling him to do and he was not really into doing it" (CD 9.4.14).

Then, gradually, Stephanie changed her practices to the point

where she could do something like an activity called "A journey with my hero": first she "discusses" with the kids, their favorite heroes from comic books, television and other books, then, they imagine together the journey that they would undertake with this hero.

> "There was all this exchange between the kids and me, that I was not doing (sic) before. I find that it involves children in the activity. What they're going to do will thus be centered around them (...) I take the child's choice into account" (CD 9.4.15).

When they're finished writing, children draw a picture of their story. Then, they present the story and the picture to the rest of the class; this way "it is the child who acts, it is the child who does the talking" (CD 9.4.15). Evaluation will be performed according to criteria elaborated with the children:

> "This is an example where in the first case I had the unique role in learning. And in the other case, it is the child who acts" (CD 9.4.16).

We can thus observe that Stephanie's idea of responsibility is expressed in a practice where she acts as a guide in a learning process undertaken by the child and that starts with his interest or preferences. Stephanie had some difficulties remembering the various little changes in her way of teaching commposition that resulted in this transfer of responsibility from the teacher to the child.

> "For sure during my career there were all the nuances starting with this straight composition and what I do now. I cannot enumerate all these nuances" (CD 9.4.17).

It is quite plausible that some aspects of this teaching practice appeared only towards the end of this series of changes. It could be the case for group evaluation, which supposed not only responsibility for one's own learning but also some competency in assessing it.

Various sources and influences facilitated these changes. Workshops held on professional development days showed her "how to do it, how to proceed with the teaching; it was very concrete" (CD

30.4.23). Formal activities allowed her to build her own materials or exposed her to new procedures. Professional journals, that she read in great numbers on these days were like a bank of ideas from which she could "pick". Also, stimulated by the climate of the new school, she felt she could try out and implement the new ideas and practices she'd come accros in journals, courses and workshops. Finally, working with children has also been an ongoing inspiration:

> "It is through the contact with the children that I gradually realized that things could be different, that the child could take more room and that it would be positive (CD 9.4.25).

These changes occur if she can see concrete examples of what to do in the classroom. Also, she has to try them out and see for herself how it goes:

> "I tried different things and I saw that it was not bad at all, that the class was not that disturbed (...) I think that everything that was offered pedagogically that brought something new and kept me from falling into a routine. I tried to take, from everything that was offered, what really suited me" (CD 1.05.18).

This last excerpt also hints at a central aspect of the change process, whereby proposals for new practices are assessed against a certain sense Stephanie has progressively established of who she is as a teacher and probably as a person.

But at this point, while it is possible to observe the general and definite direction taken by the change in the idea of responsibility in learning, it is not yet clear how far Stephanie will go in sharing this responsibility with children. A new series of experiences happening later in her career will set some boundaries as to what she will relinquish to children.

4. Third Transformation

The "learning center" experience illustrates how limits were set

to the scope of the idea of shared responsibility in learning. After five years in art classes, Stephanie asks for a new teaching assignment because of conflicts with her colleague over union-related issues (that are also related to the idea of responsibility). During her first year at a new school, she tries to set up her classroom in different learning centers ("reading center", "science center", "space center"...) where children can work at their own pace.

Stephanie identifies various influences that fostered her trial of the "learning center" approach in her teaching. "Open education" workshops she attended proposed "such practices" (CD 1.05.15); she also read a lot in this area, since she had become interested in "child-centered teaching".

While attempting to implement the approach, she observed that her classroom indeed "resembles" learning centers but that she in fact imposes her own choices on the kids:

> "What is really hard when you change your habits is to really let children decide. If you want children to have their way, you must discuss with them, you must even take votes" (CD 1.05.16).
>
> "I find it hard to involve children in the decisions I make concerning the organization of the classroom. I do it at times, for sure. I tend to be like the general who commands and says: "Do you feel like setting up a nice reading center?" and then I would explain how we could decorate it, but it would all come from me" (CD 1.05.16).

Stephanie seems to bump against what she often refers to as "her nature", that sets limits to how far she will go in practice in consulting with children about classroom processes. The total organization of the classroom environment seems to be something she's not prepared to share.

These realizations about "her nature" also coalesce with context related factors to bring about her progressive abandonment of "learning centers" for her classroom. Indeed, because of her recent move to

another school, her teaching position, is not as stable: She often changes grade levels, which means frequent modifications in class preparations and curriculum materials:

> "I was often changing grade levels, I had to build the centers, always starting from scratch, because I did not have, it requires lots of materials, organization, planning and running around looking for new activities (CD 1.05.19).

Also, she felt isolated in this new school. None of her colleagues had their classrooms set up as learning centers:

> "I think that what helps a teacher, when working with a different kind of pedagogy, is to be part of a team in the same school. So that we can stimulate one another, build up things together, exchange ideas (...). I was all alone in this school, working like that. I felt isolated, all alone in my corner" (CD 1.05.19).

Personal and contextual factors have conjoined to set the limits as to how the idea of sharing responsibility with children in the learning process would be seen in classroom practices. At this point in the formation of Stephanie's idea of responsibility, children are not privy to decisions pertaining to the general organization of the classroom environment though they can, during certain learning activities, pick up the themes, set up their own pace, use "tricks" of their own to go through a learning task. This statement summarizes her present position:

> "My objective is really to get even closer to children, in any case to become more understanding of them. To be firm, because I also do not want, my objective is not at all to have children make all the decisions, so that they'll be sitting on my head in the classroom. It's not that. But I want them to feel that I am close to them" (CD 10.06.3).

This present expression/form is however not congealed and, as she projects herself into the future, she sees herself trying out new ideas, devices or techniques that, at the least, will keep her from falling into a routine and forbid her from becoming the teacher that she always wanted to be (CD 10.06.04).

Concluding Comments

Even if our understanding of the data is still in its exploratory stage, we can already appreciate some of the possibilities of combining ethnographic and biographical approaches in the study of the formation of a teacher's pedagogy. The shared understandings achieved by the end of the ethnographic part of the study, allowed us to reconstitute the evolution of a meaningful component of Stephanie's teaching.

At this point, however, we are not satisfied with how we communicated the teacher's present pedagogy. The present expression does not allow an adequate rendition of how the domains are integrated in Stephanie's thoughts and actions. In order to do so, we'll have to deepen our understanding of the metaphor of the chain, which is Stephanie's way of communicating this integration. Also, the penetration by the idea of responsibility of all aspects of the teacher's pedagogy remains to be done.

We felt limited by the fact that it was sometimes difficult, in the biographical part of the study, to elicit precise information concerning the multiple manifestations of her teaching at various moments in her career.

However, even at this exploratory stage, we get a sense of the evolution of the idea of responsibility as congruent with Stephanie's construction of herself as a person. Imperatives now include taking care of herself - taking a sabbatical, rest or leisure activities in the evenings - as well as spending time in activities where she can gain a greater self-understanding. It's as if "the idea of responsibility" had come to encompass HER SELF.

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